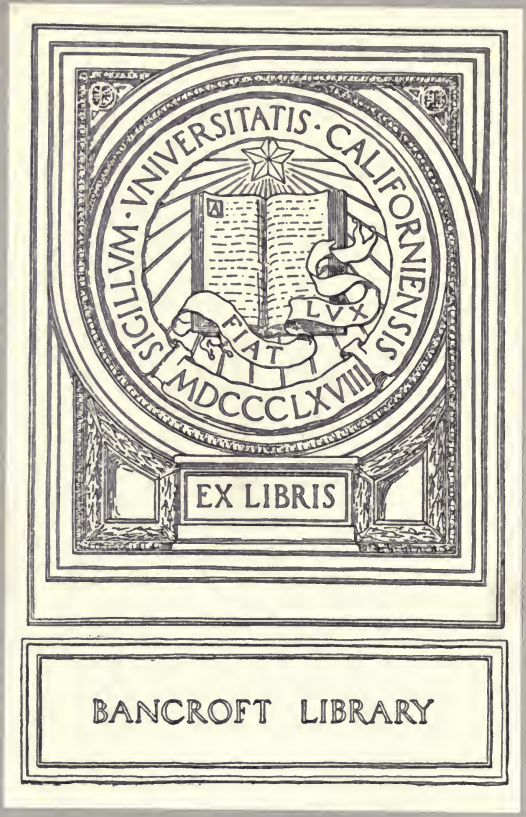
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ANTIQUITIES OF AMERICA,

THE FIRST INHABITANTS

OF

CENTRAL AMERICA,

AND THE

DISCOVERY OF NEW-ENGLAND,

BY THE NORTHMEN,

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE COLUMBUS.

WITH IMPORTANT ADDITIONS.

A LECTURE,

DELIVERED IN NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, BOSTON AND OTHER CITIES; ALSO, IN SOME OF THE FIRST LITERARY INSTITUTIONS OF THE UNION,

BY A. DAVIS,

Corresponding Member of the N. Y. Historical Society, and formerly Chaplain of the Senate, &c., New York.

SIXTEENTH EDITION, FROM THE TWELFTH BOSTON EDITION.

BUFFALO, N. Y.:
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1846.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

The generous patronage received for the delivery of the following lecture leads to its publication. Though faint the ray of knowledge it may impart, yet I trust it will be seen and its benefits rewarded, while exhibited in a different medium.

The circulation of fifteen editions shows that this hope of success has not been disappointed.

Together with original matter, the lecture is a compilation from various important works. Facts have been obtained from the first libraries in Boston, Worcester, Philadelphia, Washington and Georgetown.

The continued encouragement received from distinguished sources like the following, encourages me in issuing another edition.

From the Ornithologist.

BUFFALO, N. Y., August 1, 1844.

I have read the "Antiquities of Central America, and the discovery of New England by the Northmen five hundred years before Columbus," by A. Davis, Esq. with extreme pleasure and satisfaction; and I feel much indebted to that learned gentleman for all that he has said on this most interesting subject, in his memorable lecture above mentioned, and I trust that it will be as highly appreciated by all who may peruse it as by myself.

I take this opportunity to offer to Mr. Davis my sincere thanks for his goodness to me and have great pleasure in subscribing myself his friend and respectful humble servant,

JOHN J. AUDUBON.

To A. DAVIS, formerly Chaplain of the Senate, &c., N. Y.

From J. M'Caul, D. D., LL. D.

KING'S COLLEGE, TORONTO, May 30, 1845.

My Dear Sir,—I have read with great interest your brief condensation of the proofs which may be advanced of the discovery of America before the voyages of Columbus, and the evidence afforded by the ruins, recently discovered in the Southern part of this continent, of the existence of a powerful and civilized nation previous to the arrival of the Spaniards.

The subject is one not merely calculated to excite the attention and reward the researches of antiquarians, but is also capable (as per testimonials fully demonstrated) of being rendered highly attractive in a popular lecture.

Believe me, yours faithfully,

REV. A. DAVIS. JOHN M'CAUL.

From the Hon. G. Furman, Brooklin, N. Y.

"My Dear Sir,—You will please accept my thanks for a copy of your interesting lecture on American History anterior to Columbus, which has been to me in its perusal a source of high gratification. It is now several years since my attention was first called to your valuable labors in this important branch of American history, and am pleased, from this fourteenth edition, that they are becoming properly appreciated by the reading world; and permit me to say, it is only necessary for any person having the least taste for such inquiries, to cast their eyes over your work to become satisfied the public are under great obligations to you for the labor, care and judgment which you have manifested in treating the subject, at the same time so highly interesting, so intricate in its facts and difficult in their attainment."

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ANTIQUITIES OF AMERICA.

While the beauties of the visible creation fade on the eye, while nature reposes under the mantle of night, it is pleasant to leave the haunts of business, or the domestic scenes, and come up to the lecture room to survey the dark regions of the past, under the mild light of history.

If the age of Leo X. was characterized by great attention to the fine arts, so the present is remarkable, not only for its devotion to the embellishments of life, but for progress in historical and antiquarian researches. The most gifted minds of either sex are interested in these studies. The crowned heads of Europe, instead of imbruing their hands in the blood of their fellows, are spending mints of money in unfolding the early history of the world. That spirit of enquiry which awoke, perhaps, in the East, folds not its wings in apathy in crossing the Atlantic; for here its developments astonish both hemispheres. Knowledge is spreading over the earth not like the morning beams, which gild only the mountain tops, but like the noon-tide rays, that penetrate the deep valleys!*

The active mind of man instinctively surveys the dark regions of the past, and would gladly break the unfathomable silence of the nations of the dead, and raise the veil where their beauty and glory have slept for ages. This strong desire to learn something of those who lived when time was young, leads the antiquary, too often, to adopt groundless theories. But if there are counterfeit antiquities, there are those also that are genuine.

It will be recollected that the avaricious Spaniards discovered and conquered Mexico on the North, and Peru and Chili on the South of Central America, in the first place. But at length the solitude of the latter was broken; and *there* was discovered the "El Dorado," about which the whole Spanish nation had so long been dreaming.

*The following just tribute of praise was given by Mr. Davis, in his lecture, University Chapel, N. Y., to the Historical Society, in speaking of the progress of antiquarian research:

"And are there not more stars in the Northern than in the Southern hemisphere? So there are more constellations of intellectual light in the former than in the latter. And one of the most conspicuous is the Historical Society of New York. The light beams afar, and by its influence prominent men from foreign countries are being enrolled among the names of its distinguished members."

The appearance of these ruins shows that a nation once existed there, highly skilled in the mechanic arts, and in a state of civilization far beyond anything that we have been led to believe of the aborigines, previous to the time of Columbus.

The antiquities of America may be divided into three classes, left in succession by nations more or less enlightened; as the ruins of Central America, of Mexico and Peru, and of regions farther North.

The first knowledge of the ruins, South, was derived from accounts given by straggling hunters.

In 1787, the Spanish government sent out Captain Del Rio to survey the ruins.

Waldeck, in 1822, published in London an account of Rio's discoveries.

Capt. Dupaix was sent on a mission to Central America in 1805. He supposes the ruins were left before the deluge. Lord Kingsboro' gave an account of Dupaix's researches. His work I saw in the library of a distinguished historian, Wm. H. Prescott, Esq., Boston. This splendid work, at $400 a volume, cost the author his fortune.

Waldeck visited Central America in 1832, and spent four years in that region. He took many drawings of the ruins, but on his return they were seized by the perfidious Mexicans.

On losing the fruits of his long toil, he must have felt like Antony on being betrayed by Cleopatra:

> "All is lost!
> This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me;
> My fleet hath yielded to the foe;
> Fortune and Antony part here; even here
> Do we shake hands,"

The late Governor Galindo, of Peten, in Central America, has corresponded with the late Lieut. Governor Winthrop, Boston, relative to the antiquities of that region. For the great discoveries made, he has received a premium from one of the literary societies of Europe.

He, in speaking of one of the cities in the vicinity of Palenque, says that a gigantic Massica, or bread-fruit tree, grows on one of the altars, encircling it with its powerful roots. The most remarkable trees growing over the ruins, are the mahogany, cedar, chocolate, &c. One of the squares of the city is surrounded with six handsome obelisks, the highest of which is more than six yards high. They all bear, in basso relievo, gigantic figures. One temple has eighty such figures.

The temple of Copan was 653 feet by 524 feet in dimensions. It must have been as large as St. Peter's Church in Rome. Let us gaze on this mighty structure for instruction. It stands as a landmark on the broad field of time,—it reminds us of the remote

origin of a great empire. Centuries must have rolled away, dynasties must have succeeded each other, before orders of architecture were introduced; and a long time must have elapsed before an empire would become so luxurious as to erect the stupendous temple of Copan.

Among the vast pile of ruins, is found an architrave of black granite, finely cut. Six granite columns are seen, each of a single piece, seventeen feet high, and three feet in diameter.

The Mayon architecture in Yucatan is said to be superior to that of Palenque. It is wrought in stone, and finished with great elegance

Gen. Santa Anna says, that the antiquities of Central America are worthy of being placed in parallel with the pyramids of Egypt.

Palenque, which lies 240 miles from Tobasco, lat. 17° N., is among the most remarkable cities of the South. Palenque is a Castilian word and means "lists for fighting."

This city has emphatically been called the Thebes of America. In surveying its ruins, the traveler is led to believe that it was founded at as early a period as the renowned cities of Egypt.

How immense the city! It is supposed to have been sixty miles in circumference, and that it contained a population of nearly three millions

Palenque, lying about one thousand miles from Mexico, and being elevated five thousand feet above the ocean, enjoyed a climate almost unequalled for its pleasantness. The natural beauty of the scenery was unrivalled, the soil rich and fertile beyond any other portion of the globe.

One of the principal structures revealed to the eye of the antiquarian, is the Teoculi, or temple. Its style of architecture resembles the Gothic. It is rude, massive and durable. Though resembling the Egyptian edifices, also, yet this and the other buildings are peculiar, and are different from all others hitherto known.

The entrance to this temple is on the East side, by a portico more than one hundred feet in length and nine broad. The rectangular pillars of the portico have their architraves adorned with stucco work of shields and other devices. The temple stands on an elevation of sixty feet. Among the ruins, different objects of worship have been found; and in particular, an idol of pure gold about six inches long. Amid this wilderness of ruins, are now to be seen fourteen large stone buildings, with many of their apartments in good condition.

The antiquity of this city is manifest not only from its nameless hieroglyphics and other objects, but from the age of some of the trees growing over buildings where once the hum of industry and the voice of merriment were heard. The concentric circles of some of these trees were counted, which showed that they were more than 900 years of age. Mr. Brown, who lives in the vicinity

of Palenque, has a table, the entire leaf of which was made from a tree, growing over these ruins.

Similar beautiful and majestic ruins extend 1000 miles. Humboldt visited a splendid building, 800 miles from Mexico, that forty years since was seven stories high. The Spaniards have demolished it mostly to get materials for building dwellings and sugar-houses. Have not the Vandals of the New World made desolation more desolate?

Mr. Stephens' new work on "Central America," confirms the statements of other travelers, while it hightens our wonder by the graphic description of the ruins of the desolated cities, especially of those found in Copan and Palenque. There, he says, "architecture, sculpture, painting, and all the arts that embellish life, had flourished in an overgrown forest."

Among the specimens of the arts, he found massive obelisks, bearing on their sides sculptured images, and medallion tablets—large altars, ornamented with hieroglyphics giving a record of those who reared them—spendid temples, adorned with human figures executed in stucco and bass relief—walls built of hewn stone. The specimens of sculpture equalled any thing he saw in Egypt.

In his second work he says, "These ruins are skeletons rising from their graves, wrapt in their shrouds, claiming no affinity with the works of any known people." Long will these works of art stand alone in majesty and beauty,

"And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer."

The Chavalier Frederichal, attache of the Austrian legation, lately spent nine months at the South. He found, in a place hitherto untrod by modern travelers, a majestic group of pillars. There were ten rows, and in each row there were forty-eight columns. With his Daguerreotype apparatus he took a great number of excellent impressions. From these, when magnified, he has made drawings, which show the original, by their richness, elegance and finish, to be the work of a highly cultivated people.

It is natural that we should linger around these inanimate objects. They remind us of splendid cities that, like Troy, once "were." But, above all, they tell us of the illustrious of other days. What are ruins to us, but as they remind us of the enterprise and wisdom of those who reared them. What were Carthage without the recollection of the ill-fated Dido, or the daring deeds of Hannibal? And what will Mount Vernon be centuries hence, to our posterity, but as it will remind them of the valor, patriotism and virtues of the Father of our Republic?

The monumental history of Central America tells us that this is not a *New* World. And we awake with astonishment that there was once the seat of a great empire, before David reigned over

the twelve tribes of Israel, or Octavius waved his sceptre over the civilized world

But alas! the foundation of cities as magnificent as those that adorned the banks of the Nile, have vanished like the generations before the flood.

"Every house is builded by some man," but who erected the splendid temples of Palenque, none can tell, save "He who made all things." Unnumbered centuries have passed away since the noon-day of Palencian glory. There the wing of endless night broods over all that was once beautiful and grand—

> "Where senates once the weal of nations planned
> Hisseth the gliding snake, through the hoary weeds
> That clasp the mouldering columns,"

I have seen an original representation in stucco of the following Palencian head, possibly a representation of their gods, in the possession of the late Professor Dod, Princeton College. Such are found on the palace walls:

Shade of Spurzheim, tell, if thou canst, what qualities such a formed head as this implies!



This helmet is said to resemble those described by Homer.

Oh! that some mighty genius, like that of Belzoni, would arise and remove from this city of the world called *new*, the veil that conceals its origin.

It is supposed by Stephens and Norman that the hieroglyphics of the South will, like those of Egypt, at length be developed. In anticipation of those developments, well may we exclaim, "visions

of glory spare our aching sight." Deep shades rest on the antiquities of America, yet a few feeble rays of light enliven the gloom.

It is supposed that this city was destroyed by some internal convulsion, or, like those of the South of Europe, was overwhelmed by the barbarians of the North.

Possibly famine or pestilence might have desolated that fair region.

It is not singular that it should have been concealed from view for ages when we recollect that cities of the eastern continent have, in like manner remained in oblivion till of late. We allude to the ruins of Pæstum, in Campania, of Italy, and those of Petra of Idumea, in Asia. A new forest hid for centuries—the former from the degenerate sons of Rome, while the splendid structures of Petra were known only to Bedouins for over a thousand years. Who does not delight to read about the roses of Pæstum? Yet they still unfold their inimitable petals amid the ruins of palaces, and beside the dilapidated temples.

Do we admire the boundless forests, the lofty mountains, and the majestic rivers of our hemisphere? The vast wilderness of ruins, once enlivened by intelligent beings, should demand a higher claim to our admiration.

The antiquities of America stretch from the great lakes of the North and West, to the southern parts of Peru on the South; from the Allegany mountains on the East, to the Rocky mountains on on the West; and even from the Pacific to the Atlantic ocean.

The Mexicans hold the next place in the scale of civilization to the Central Americans.

The Toltecs probably came into Anahauc, or the vale of Mexico, at the close of the seventh century. They flourished four centuries, and suddenly disappeared. They were an enlightened and amiable people. Though pagans, they did not, like the Aztecs, who took possession of the country in 1325, offer up human sacrifices.

Although the Aztecs, or Mexicans, excelled in astronomy, architecture, the fine arts, agriculture, legislation, jurisprudence, and the display of many of those social virtues that dignify humanity, yet their theology cast a dark shade over all the attractions their history otherwise displays.

They believe in one Supreme God, in thirteen subordinate deities, and over two hundred inferior ones. The god who received the most devotion was Mars, their god of war. On his altar human victims bled. To this Moloch of the West twenty thousand at least were offered annually! Such is man where he sees not the attributes of God in the "things that are made." Yes, all nature

is but the reflection of the true God. The modest violet, fresh from the sleep of winter, tells him there is a God, and that He is great and good. [See Rom. 1, 20.] Nought but the bright beams of the "Sun of Righteousness" can dissipate the darkness with which man has enshrouded his moral nature.

Remarkable was the progress of the Mexicans in the science of astronomy Their year was divided into eighteen months of twenty days each; and five unlucky days. As the year is composed of nearly six hours more than three hundred and sixty-five days, there still remained an excess, which they provided for by intercalation. At the expiration of fifty-two years, the end of a cycle, they interposed twelve and a half days, the number which had fallen in arrear. Time was marked on their calendar stones with as much accuracy as is evinced by the modern improvements of astronomy, into two minutes and nine seconds in the year. I have seen in the museum of Mexican antiquities belonging to the Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, a beautiful representation of a large calendar stone to be seen in the city of Mexico.

If the Carthagenians excelled in navigation, the Mexicans were pre-eminent in sublime pursuit. Nature impresses on the multitude of minds a various bias. To the Mexicans

> "——— she taught the fabric of the spheres;
> The changeful moon, the circuit of the stars,
> The golden zones of Heaven."

How magnificent must have been that temple at Mexico, at whose altars five thousand priests officiated! But the city of Tezcuco, on the opposite shore of the lake, was still the seat of a higher advance in civilization than was displayed in Mexico It was the capital of a splendid kingdom of that name. It was the Athens of the Western World. The king erected a magnificent pile of buildings. It extended from east to west 1234 yards, and from north to south 978. Innumerable were the attractions that met the eye on wandering through the courts of this majestic structure.

As walls incrusted with alabasters and richly tinted stucco, tapestries of variegated feather work, gardens with baths, and sparkling fountains overshadowed by groves of cyprus and cedar. There nature seemed ever dressed in her bridal robes; there light and shade combined to perfect the landscape.

While America excels the eastern continent in the magnitude of its rivers and mountains, it can present also the largest pyramid on the globe,—that of Cholula, six miles from Puebla, Mexico. It covers 44 acres. It is 180 feet high. Its top includes one acre. On this lofty eminence, in days of yore, stood an altar where human victims were immolated to appease the wrath of the angry deity, whose image stood near. And, strange to tell, their bodies were afterwards devoured as a religious rite!

Ah, could those "morning stars" that sang together at the birth of a fair creation, weep, would they not shed tears on witnessing the barbarity of those "who have sought out many inventions."

In contemplating the Mexicans, we are reminded of the importance of revelation; for though enlightened, yet "by wisdom they knew not God."

If the Central Americans came from the plains of Shinar, it is supposed the Mexicans emigrated from the North-West. Baron Von Humboldt says the Mexicans had many traditions of the fall of man, and of the flood, and he thinks they came originally from Aztland, lat. 42° north.

John Delafield, Jr., Esq., has published an interesting work on the antiquities of Mexico. He thinks the Mexicans "emigrated from the North, and on their way constructed the various tumuli, embankments, fossa, &c., found in western North America." An "Aztec map," some 14 feet in length, accompanies the volume, and explains the travels of this race through America.

Much has been learned in relation to Mexican history, but much must remain forever concealed, as the first Archbishop of Mexico caused a mountainous pile to be made of the first MSS. of that country, and ordered them to be burnt in the market place. Such was the loss effected by the Omar of the West.

We know less of the antiquities of Peru than of those farther North. They may be ranked with the Mexicans in point of civilization.

The antiquities of North America consist of fortifications, mounds, pottery, metallic instruments, &c. They must have been left by intelligent nations at an early period. This is evident from the remark of the late President Harrison. He observes that it would take the trees growing where a forest was cut down fifty years since, five hundred years to equal in height the surrounding woods, and that a forest of the largest trees at the mouth of the Great Miami, consisting of fifteen acres, covers the ruins left by former races.

There are the remains of a fortification, 60 miles west of Milwaukie, including an area of 30 acres of land. Large trees are growing on the walls. I have a piece of the burnt brick of which they are built. This place is called Aztland.

I have also a piece of a pillar found fifteen feet below the surface of the earth in Chautauque county, N. Y. Nameless are similar antiquities the curious and intelligent are bringing to light from various parts.

The people of Ohio, living in a land of monuments, are much interested in the study of antiquities.

Mr. Squier, of Chilicothe, has found some remarkable antiquities in mounds of that vicinity. He has penetrated a large number of the ancient tumuli. He divides them mainly into three classes. The first were erected for sacrificial altars, such being found under the different strata. The second were built as burial places, and the third for places of look-out. An account of his researches has been published by the Ethnoligical Society, N. Y.

First Inhabitants of America.—We will not say, as the Athenians said of their nation, that the first inhabitants of America were created when the sun was first lit up in the sky; but we must presume they early reached this continent from the old world.

The learned Dr. Clarke says that the continents were once united, but that, by the force of winds and waves, the isthmuses were broken up and formed into islands along the coasts. Easy, however, is the transition from the East to the West, by the way of Bhering's straits, when we consider that they are only thirteen leagues wide.

Adverse winds, also, might have driven the frail vessels of the ancients to the region lying on the gulf of Mexico, and elsewhere.

But, as tropical animals found in America could not have crossed over by Bhering's straits when frozen, they must have come by land that once extended from Asia, or Africa to America in the torrid zone. Should it be asked why certain animals, as the horse and the cow, not found originally on this continent, did not cross by this continuous range of lands, we answer, because the original continent was divided as possibly in the days of Peleg, (Gen. 10, 25,) before such animals had a opportunity to migrate.

I am inclined to believe that the land that united the now two continents, was the Atlantis, spoken of by Plato, Homer and Hesiod. Plato saw an account of this land which disappeared, in the hieroglyphics of Egypt. I saw in the Jesuit's College, Georgetown, an important article on this subject. It was stated that there were the remains of a sunken tract of land once lying between Brazil and Africa—that such are seen also in the islands of Cape Verd and Ascension, and others, and in the numerous sandbanks observed by Bauche in particular, who sounded that part of the Atlantic with great accuracy.

Extract of a letter from Rev. Mr. Heyer to Rev. Dr. Van Vrankin, New Brunswick. "Mr. Davis advocates the theory that I met with more than 20 years ago, in "Calcott on the Deluge," that America was peopled by land soon after the flood; that at that time America was united to the eastern continent, and that in the days of Peleg the earth was divided. The Hebrew word NEPELEGEH, divided as by the coming in of the sea; from the Greek word *Pelagos*, and the Latin word *Pelagus*, being derived.

I think from the plains of Shinar, men and animals diverged in all directions. As it is said in Gen. 11, 8, "So the Lord scattered them from thence upon the face of *all* the earth."

As the Europeans on coming here found none or few animals peculiar to the eastern continent, I think only a part of the various species preserved by Noah migrated west. Those left behind ever remained different from those found in the New World by the Spaniards. If this idea is new to others, I hope it may be considered more reasonable than the infidel opinion that men and animals were distinct creations here from those of Asia.

I found this idea corroborated by Buffon, as quoted by Clavigero in his work on Mexico.

Think you they would have transported venomous serpents from the old to the new world?

Ogilby, cosmographer to the English sovereign, 1671, thinks that men and animals came, immediately after the flood, from Armenia to Tartary; and from the latter place to this continent, by a continuous range of land extending from Asia to America by Bhering straits.

I think with Georgii Hornii, who published his views, 1629, in a Latin book, that this migration to this continent took place immediately after the confusion of tongues at Babel.

By this primitive people, the cities of the South rose probably simultaneously with those that adorned the banks of the Nile.

The traces of an extinct race of men about nine feet in length, are to be found in various parts, as in Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania; Rhode Island and New York.

And is it strange it should have been said in the sacred volume, "and there were giants in those days?"

The lights of science and revelation commingle, forming one broad stream of light that is not lost but amid the radiance that encircles the throne of the Eternal. As to the red men, clouds of obscurity conceal their origin. Mr. Schoolcraft, late Indian Agent, thinks they are of Asiatic origin. Many suppose they are the descendents of the Israelites. Vague are their own tradition as to their origin. Some Indians say they come from the East, some from the West; some from the North, and some from the South. Some think they came from beneath the earth; others suppose they came from the skies.

Mr. Norman has published a valuable work, "Rambles in Yucatan," lat. 20° north. I have seen some of his remarkable antiquities, as Penates, hieroglyphics in lime stone, the material of these buildings. He kindly gave me a piece of Zuporte wood from lintels found amid the ruins. It is hard, fine, heavy and as lasting as time. Beautiful were the architecture and paintings he saw. The latter was in fresco, and as fresh apparently as if recently executed. Mr. N. thinks the cities of the South are of

very remote origin; that they were antiquities before the Christian era.

After a brief survey of American antiquities, well may we, like the old patriot of Rome, ascend some lofty eminence and look over the wide space of desolation! Where once nations met in the noon-day of their glory, now wild beasts roam and venomous serpents wend their way. To gaze upon the past, we must cross the melancholy flood

"Unto the kingdom of perpetual night."

So pass away the glories of the world, with man its lord! There is nothing permanent, save in the Spirit's land, and if there be any change there, it is Eternity's rich drama of bloom and perfection.

The eyes of mankind, from the time of Pythagoras, have been turned to the West, in anticipation that here new discoveries were to be made; and hither were the adventurers at length led.

Seneca, Diadorus Siculus, Aristotle, as well as others, speak of regions west of the Atlantic.

It is thought Virgil alludes in the following lines to places West. In speaking of Augustus, he says that—

"He shall his power to India extend,
Beyond the annual circle, and beyond
The sun's long progress, where great Atlas bears,
Laden with golden stars, the glittering spheres."

First known Discoveries of America.—It is thought Biarne was accidentally driven by fierce winds on the coast of Newfoundland, before Lief sailed to the West.

The discovery of America by the Northmen, excites a vast deal of curiosity. And is it not a laudable curiosity that leads one to ascertain what white men first trod regions in which the modest wild flower wasted its sweetness on the desert air?

As Geography is one of the eyes of History, it would be well at this time to direct the attention to the map of North America, and to those of Massachusetts and Rhode Island in particular.

The Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians, in Copenhagen, have lately published an important work. While the contents of this massive work are invaluable, its mechanical execution reflects great honor on the society that published it.

This work is called, as translated from the Latin, "American Antiquities, or Northern Writings of Things in America, before the time of Columbus."

The determination was formed some years since by the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Copenhagen, to publish the authorities on which these accounts rest, in the original documents, accompanied with full commentaries and illustrations. The *text* is in the Icelandic tongue."

The inquiry is often made, "who were the Northmen?" They were the descendants of the Scandinavians, who, it is thought sprang from the Thracians mentioned by Homer—a nation now extinct. The Danes, the Swedes, the Norwegians and the Icelanders, all come under the name of Northmen or Norsemen. Their literature has been compared, in extent, to the literary remains of Greece, and Latinum. This opens a new fountain of research, where the scholar may often

"Return and linger, linger and return."

This great work contains two Icelandic documents, now for the *first* time published accurately, in a complete form, purporting to be histories written by or for persons who discovered and visited the North American coast early in the eleventh century, confirmed and illustrated by extracts from no less than fifteen other original manuscripts, in which the facts set forth in these histories are either mentioned or alluded to. The Royal Society has already collected two thousand Sagas, or works of Scandinavian or Icelandic history.

In this work, in particular, is found Adam of Bremen's account of the discovery of America, communicated to him in the eleventh century, by Sweyn Estrythson, king of Denmark.

1. Are these documents genuine?
2. If so, why have they not been heard of before?

The work itself contains evidences of the antiquity and authenticity of the manuscripts, from which the publication has been made, sufficient to raise them above any just suspicion.

These documents, as Professor Rafn says, have been known to Icelandic scholars; but these have been so few, comparatively, and the means of those few so limited, that they have not been able to give them a suitable examination, much less to be at the expense of publishing them.

How long did the ancient classics, for instance, lay concealed in the monasteries of Europe, for the want of some one to exhibit them to the public view? These Icelandic documents may have been hid, in like manner, in the libraries of priests. And we may say that the society of antiquarians, in Copenhagen in bringing these documents to light, resembles the conduct of the poet laureat, Petrarch, in the fourteenth century, who, at his own expense, had the valuable manuscripts of antiquity dragged from the dust of the cloisters, transcribed and exhibited to the world.

Who does not admire the lovely scenery, where the beautiful and sublime are blended, displayed in the succession of falls at Trenton, N. Y.? Yet these were concealed for ages, till a master spirit revealed them to an admiring world. And does not the raven wing of night hide the works of art, also, till disclosed in a similar way? The learned of Iceland, though like the generality of poets,

poor; yet they were not disposed, like Milton, to sell their manuscripts for a paltry sum.

It is well known the Norwegians have long claimed the honor of discovering and colonizing America before the time of Columbus.

Instead of this discovery being a new-fangled theory, as some say, there have been several works published in Europe upwards of a century, which speak of these facts. Wormius speaks of this discovery in a Latin translation, published in the University of Oxford, in or about 1716. In Adam of Bremen's account, published 1629, he uses the following striking language: "Non fabulosa opinione, sed certa relatione Danorum;" that is, in a free traaslation, "This is not a fabulous opinion, but a true narrative given by the Danes themselves." Dr. Franklin, in a letter to a distinguished antiquary formerly of Switzerland, says *positively* that the Danes came into New England before the time of Columbus. Dr. Mather published an account, also, of this discovery in 1772.

The celebrated Dr. Henderson, who travelled in Iceland, says that the fact of this early discovery was well known to the Icelanders—that it was authenticated by Northern historians. It is a remarkable fact, that Iceland, where these documents relating to the early discovery were preserved, was the Athens of the North, during the Dark Ages.

During the Middle Ages, the Icelanders were the most intelligent people in the North. Even now, as Henderson says, youth can repeat passages from Latin and Greek authors, who have never been but a few miles from the place of their birth. Truly, the hardy Icelanders were our librarians and historians.

Iceland appears to have been a medium of communication between Norway and Greenland,—a stepping stone, as it were, from one continent to another.

Iceland, thought by some to be the "Ultima Thule" of Virgil, was discovered by the Norwegians in 861. The oppression of king Harold Harfaga drove them there for an asylum.

But the restless spirit of the Northmen would not allow them to be idle. They made incursions in every direction, and discovered Greenland in 984.

In 986, a colony was begun by Eric the Red. This was at length destroyed. By the exertions of the Danish Society, the ruins of this settlement have been discovered. It was located on the West, near Cape Farwell. It is seen in the remains of churches and buildings.

Leif the son of Eric, commenced a voyage of discovery in the year 1000. His crew consisted of thirty-five men Leif was the first to introduce missionaries into Greenland.

After sailing sometime south-west, they made land. They anchored and went ashore. This place was destitute of grass, and was covered with a slaty rock, which they called Helluland. This

is supposed to be Labrador. Fishermen and travellers of the present day give a like description of that barren region.

From thence they sailed southwardly; and after holding on for some time, they again made land and went ashore. This country was level, had a low coast, presenting here and there, bluffs of white sand, and was thickly covered with wood. This they named Markland or Woodland. This is thought to be Nova Scotia.

Leaving Markland, they sailed south-westerly, with a fair wind, two days before seeing land again, when they passed down a promontory, probably the east side of Cape Cod, stretching east and north; and then turning west between an island, (Martha's Vineyard) and the main land, they entered a bay (Naragansett Bay) through which a river (Taunton River) flowed, when they came to anchor and went ashore. Resolving to spend the winter here they called the place Leifsbuthir, or place of booths. Here, finding grapes very plenty, they called the place Vinland or Wineland the good. This land, to those coming from the remote North, appeared as nature in the "world's first spring."

Early in the season they returned to Greenland. Leif's return became the principle subject of conversation.

The next adventure was Thorwold his brother. And you will observe that he and the other navigators gave the same account of places they visited. Were not this the case, who could believe any of their reports?

Thorwold, thinking the country had not been sufficiently explored, set sail in 1002, and proceeded to Leifsbuthir, where he lived till 1004.

In the spring of 1004, he sailed from Leifsbuthir. After passing along the shore of the promontory, east and north, they sailed round a sharp point of land, called Kjarlanes. This must have been Cape Cod. Kjarlanes implies *Keel-cape.* For Cape Cod at the extremity, is in the shape of the keel of ancient vessels, which curved *inward.*

These Northmen were peaceable men. They were not like Phæton, who would gladly have seized the reins of the chariot of the sun to set the world on fire. It must not be denied, however, that the second great navigator, Thorwold, assailed the natives without cause; but in using the sword he perished by the sword. On receiving a mortal wound, he requested that after his death, crosses might be placed at either end of his grave.

The Catholic ministers, in giving an account of their first missionary labors in this country, speak of the custom of the natives in wearing crosses. Such must have been introduced by the Northmen Christians.

I mentioned this circumstance, lately to the librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester; and he said that a

cross had been sent to that institution by a gentleman of Ohio. I saw this emblem of the Christian faith. It must have been hid from the light of heaven for centuries. This silver cross is about two and a half inches long. It was found on the breast of a female skeleton, one of which was dug from a mound at Columbus, over which a forest of trees had grown. On this cross the capital letters I. S. are perfectly visible. And what can these letters imply, but the initials of the sacred name, IESUS SALVATOR?

Who can doubt, then, that the "Sun of Righteousness" cast his bright beams on the land west of the dread Atlantic, long before the time of Columbus.

In 1006, Thorfins or Thorfin commanded one of the three ships that came from Iceland to Greenland. He was of royal lineage.

In the spring of 1007, Thorfin, with three ships and one hundred and sixty men, besides cattle and all necessary materials for establishing a colony, set sail for Vinland.

They sailed to Helluland or Labrador; from thence to Markland or Nova Scotia; and from thence to Kjarlanes, or Cape Cod.—Sailing south by the east side of the promontory which terminated at Kjarlanes, they passed along beaches or trackless deserts of sand. How descriptive of this bleak and sterile coast!

Those who have sailed from Boston to Narragansett Bay, are ready to say that I am not drawing an ideal picture.

Continuing their course they arrived at an island. They called it Shaumey. This is supposed to be Martha's Vineyard. Nine men went away in one of the ships and never returned. It is said they were driven on the coast of Ireland, where they were seized as slaves.

In the spring Thorfin and one hundred and fifty others went to the main land. They called the place Hop, the residence afterwards of King Phillip. Here they found large numbers of skrellings or natives. Thorfin carried on a traffic with them, by exchanging bits of colored cloth for furs. In consequence of their frequent attacks, in 1009 they returned to Greenland. Then, it will be recollected, the Northmen had not the use of fire-arms with which to defend themselves against the assaults of the savages.—These lords of the wilds had a rude kind of engine, by which they hurled large stones against their foes; and it is possible that the white man would never have driven the red man from the Atlantic to the Rocky mountains, but for the invention of gunpowder.

I cannot forbear to speak of the valor of one of this crew of the Northmen, a female. When all the rest were disposed to flee before the savage foe, she exclaimed: "If I only had a weapon, I ween I could fight better than any of you." Ah! when we consider the patriotism of the females at the seige of Carthage, who cut their locks to make ropes for engines of war; and when we recollect the

courage of Isabella of Castile, who, at the conquest of Grenada, though in ill health, led on her veterans to conquest and glory, have we not reason to suppose that this Scandinavian was sincere in her declaration? Truly valor and benevolence are but parallel streams in the female heart. We would not applaud courage, however unless under the control of a high and holy principle.

Thorfin married Gudrida, the widow of Thorstein, third son of Eric. She accompanied her husband to Vinland. Snorre their son was the first white child born in America. From him descended the distinguished associate of Proffessor Rafn, Finn Magnusen.—The late great Sculptor, Thorwalsden of Denmark, was of this family. Bishop Thulock Rudolfson, was a descendant of Thorfin's and it is supposed that he wrote or compiled these documents.

A distinguished geologist from Denmark has lately found the remains of an Icelandic city in Brazil. He discovered Runic inscriptions on flagstones. Above all, he found a statue of the Northman god of thunder. Thor, with his attributes, the magic girdle and hammer.

Thorfin, the most distinguished of these returned to Iceland, where he ended his days, living in great splendor

The editor of the American Antiquities, Professor Rafn, and his associate, Professor Finn Magnusen, think that Vinland was situated in the east part of Rhode Island, and in the south part of Massachusetts, on or about Narragansett Bay and Taunton River.

The points in the Icelandic documents alluding to the locality to Vinland, may be reckoned the Geography, Natural History, Astronomical Phenomena, and vestiges of Residence of Northmen in that place. All these, in the opinion of the editor of the American Antiquities, point to the head of Narragansett Bay, or Mt. Hope Bay, as the locality of Hop, the central part of Vinland.

As the Royal Society have held correspondence with several learned societies in this country for some years, they are well qualified to form a judgment on this subject. Dr. Webb now of Boston formerly Secretary of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and J. R. Bartlett, Esq., of New York, have been very efficient agents in aiding the Royal Society in presenting this great work to the world.

The following letter from the late General Holstein, Professor in the "Albany Female Academy," will show the care taken to acquire information relative to American Antiquities:

"In proof the great exertions made by the Northern Antiquarian Society, in Copenhagen, to acquire a knowledge of Scandinavian Antiquities in America, I hereby state that, several years since a letter of inquiry, sealed with the seal of the Society, was sent to a professional gentleman of Geneva, in this State, a translation of which I made from the Danish tongue."

The Geography of Vinland.—Concerning the situation of Helluland there can be no doubt, as it was the first land southwest of Greenland. Where else could this have been, unless the coast of Labrador.

Markland was situated south-west from Helluland, three day's sail, or three hundred and sixty English miles. This is supposed to be Nova Scotia.

The distance of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick agrees with the account the Icelanders gave of Markland.

Vinland was situated two day's sail, or about two hundred and forty English miles to the south-west of Markland; and if Markland has been properly located, must be sought in or the near south part of Massachusetts.

In the Icelandic documents, it is said that Hop, the residence of Thorfin, was situated on an elevation of land, near a river which flowed south, through a bay into the ocean. From this the land stretched east; and, turning north, formed a promontory, which terminated in a point or cape, which they called Kjarlanes. The east side of the promontory was bound by long, narrow beaches, or sand hills. To those who, like myself, have often viewed the Atlantic, from these sand hills, this account appears peculiarly striking.

Natural History of Vinland.—Vinland was remarkable for its beautiful vines, maple trees, maize, and a great variety of wild animals. The waters abounded with fish, and were occasionally visited with whales. Birds were numerous. The eider duck was seen about the islands in large numbers.

As to vines, they are said to be numerous even now; and this is more particularly true of the country around Narragansett Bay.—And was not an island called Martha's Vineyard, on account of the multiplicity of vines growing there?

The celebrated Bishop Berkly, who attempted to establish a theological seminary in Rhode Island, says, in his letter to his friends in Europe, that vines were as plenty on the Island as in Italy. Gosnald, who visited the Elizabeth Isles in 1602, say, that vines were in great profusion there.

In the documents it is said that, in that region, are the red, sugar and bird's-eye maple. The Northmen cut down the trees; and, after they were dry, they loaded their ships with the timber. It is supposed that the bird's-eye variety was made an article of commerce.

As to Indian corn or maize, it seems our pilgrim fathers found some in what is now called Truro, near the end of the Cape. It was buried in the earth to preserve it. Indian corn has never been found North of 45° North latitude.

It is needless to remind the reader of the multiplicity of fish that still abound in the waters of this region. The sportsman, may, at

this day, tell his friends, in the language of Capt. Smith, of Jamestown, who described this quarter, "of the pleasures to be derived from angling, and crossing the sweet air, from isle to isle, over the silent streams of a calm sea."

As to whales, I have occasionally seen them spouting around the sandy shores of the Cape.

In regard to the eider duck, in the Latin translation it is called "anas mollissima," a duck with the finest feathers. The real eider duck of Iceland, is, at this day, frequently seen around Martha's Vineyard. Wild fowl must have been numerous there, as an island is still called Egg Island, from the quantity of eggs they desposited.*

THORFIN DESCRIBES THE SOIL AND CLIMATE.—The winters of of Vinland are said to be remarkably mild, but little snow falling, and cattle subsisting out of doors, through the winter.

This account does not agree with the description of New England winters at this time. Still, however, it has been the practice of the farmers on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, to let their sheep and cattle lie out during the winter. But the cold winters of New England, compared with those of Greenland, are as the mildness of spring. They speak, however, of a snowy winter.

But there have been great changes in the face of the earth and in the climate in different ages. Change is the law of nature. Has not one of the bright clusters been blotted out from the map of heaven? Such changes also take place on the face of the earth.

The Dead Sea, was, in early times, sixty miles long. It is now only thirty. And even old Ontario and Erie have receeded from their former bounds, leaving to the present generation a rich tract of land, several miles wide, and a beautiful ridge-road. Who does not admire the everlasting rock, rising in stern grandeur, on either side of the Mowhawk, at the Little Falls, N. Y.? Yet, the lovely vale above must once have been the bed of a vast lake. This is manifest from the fact, that there are "pot holes" found at an elevation of sixty feet above the river, at these falls.

These circular excavations were made ages since, by the *circumvolution* of stones, driven by the rapid descent of the waters. You can see a demonstration of this fact, by looking at the high falls of Black River or Trenton.

And what a mighty labor was that for the waters of this lake to have found their way, gradually through the high and continuous wall of granite where now the Mohawk murmurs as it rolls along its new channel.

*Mr. Audubon, whose letter to me is on the second page, says he has seen in Labrador, twenty-seven nests of the eider duck within a very small compass

Geological facts prove that it was much warmer, formerly, in the North than it is now.

Large forests once flourished in Lapland.

It is not to be disputed that, in former ages, Iceland produced timber in abundance. Large trees are occasionally found there in the marshes and valleys, to a considerable depth in the ground — Segments of the fossil-trees have lately been exported, in proof of the alleged fact.

It is asserted in the ancient Icelandic records, that when Ingulf the Norwegian, first landed in Iceland, 879, he found so thick a cluster of birch trees that he penetrated them with difficulty.

Henderson, in his travels in Iceland, says that the climate has deteriorated there, from the fact that it was once shaded with forests.

When the first Norwegian colony settled in Greenland, about 1000 years ago, they found no difficulty from ice in approaching the coast, and a regular correspondence was supported by their people for many years.

Astronomical Phenomena.—The learned editor and his associate deduce from the astronomical data, lat. 41° 24′ 16″, which is the latitude of Narragansett Bay, and Mount Hope. There, at the winter solstice, December 22, the day is nine hours.

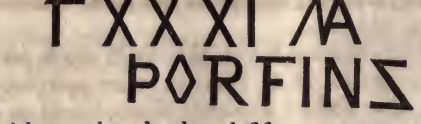
That the Northmen were capable of taking latitudes, is evident from the circumstance, that at that period they speak of eclipses, which have lately been calculated by Sir David Brewster, and the distinguished Norwegian astronomer, Hanstein, and found correct.

The reading, however, that leads to the above calculation, has been disputed. The whole controversy turns upon the meaning of two words. From what we can understand, we presume the editor is correct in his exposition.

But suppose we were to reject all history on account of some *apparent* or *real* discrepancy in narration? In such a case, some future reader might declare that the history of the American revolution was neither credible nor authentic, for it is said that the distinguished battle of the 17th June, 1775, was fought on Bunker's Hill, instead of Breed's. Who does not know that Bunker's Hill, rising back of Breed's, is *more elevated* than the latter on which the monument is rising? [Yes, and by the patriotism of the ladies of 1840, now towers to the stars.]

Little can be said of the vestiges of the residence of the Northmen in this country.—There is a large rock at the junction of Smith's creek with Taunton river, with a singular inscription on it. It was evidently made with an iron instrument. Passing

over the particular remarks of the editor on these letters, I would give his supposition as to their meaning.



Thorfins, with one hundred and fifty-one men took possession of this country. The first figure on the second line is wanting in the rock. It is supposed it was made as above for TH. While Mr. Schoolcraft believes in the discovery of the Northmen, he thinks this inscription was left by the Indians.

Professor Rafn has deciphered an inscription on the Paradisic rock of Iceland, which he says proves beyond a doubt the European origin of the inscription on this in Massachusetts.

John R. Bartlett, Esq., copied the inscription. He found the characters permanently imbedded in the rock called Gneiss.

There are similar inscriptions on rocks in the vicinity of Mount Hope Bay.

The people of the North of Europe were fond of making inscriptions on rocks on the borders of lakes and rivers; for such are found in Norway, Sweden and Scotland. They are called Runes.

The Northmen originally used sixteen of these Runic characters.

One of these inscriptions, found on a rock in Sweden, has been deciphered by Professor Finn Magnusen. The inscription relates to a battle fought about A. D. 680 between the kings of Norway and Sweden. Accounts of this battle were given by authentic historians. In a work just issued in Denmark, it is proved that there are several other inscriptions found in the neighborhood of Taunton like the one above. Also, that the old stone building at Newport, R. I., was erected by the Northmen; for it is exactly like the stone houses of Norway, built as baptisteries. The oldest people of Rhode Island know nothing of the origin of that curiously built edifice.

Ex-Gov. Gibbs, of R. I., owns it, and believes it was erected by the Northmen. Rev. Mr. Kip, of Albany, tells me he saw at the residence of the Duke of Tuscany, a Swedish Count, who spake of this building as the work of the Northmen. He was perfectly familiar with the discoveries of those whom he proudly called his people. Mr. K. also saw in Italy the famous painting of Leutze, representing the landing of the Northmen in America. This large painting has been brought to New York, where I saw it lately among other grand specimens of living masters.

The light of evidence constantly flowing in from every quarter, confirms fully the fact that the men of the North crossed the Atlantic before the day of Columbus. Objections to this theory are now few, and, like angel's visits, "far between."

The late Noah Webster, Esq., told me he examined the subject forty years since, and came to the above conclusion

W. H. Prescott, LL. D., advances the same opinion in his late splendid work on Mexico.

Bishop Hawks has written a valuable little work on "lost Greenland, in which he speaks of 17 bishops, who successively presided in that country. The colony suddenly disappeared in or near 1614. The present colony was established in 1721. The son of a Danish bishop told me he lately saw the Governor of Greenland, an old school-mate of his, who showed him a book published in Greenland, giving an account of these discoveries. It had a rude map of Cape Cod and Boston Harbor.

Were the Northmen capable of making discoveries, and of recording them? The rude children of our forests could not perform a work so mighty.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, spake of the invasion of the North before the Christian era. He says of Cimbri, that they were not a small tribe, but mighty in fame; that the vestiges of their ancient glory still remained in their fortifications; that no other nation had so often given them cause to dread their arms—not the Carthagenians, or Spaniards or Gauls.

In later times the Northmen made incursions upon Germany, France, England, the Orkney, Farroe and Shetland Isles.

The French were in such fear of the Northmen, that they inserted in their Liturgy, "A furore Normanorum, libera nos, O Domine."*

In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Danes or Northmen invaded England, and seated one of their favorite princes, Canute, on the throne of Alfred.

They were a daring people — the sea was their home — the mountain wave was the scene of their sport — far and wide did they wander without compass to guide.

Their vessels were built of timber that is now eagerly sought by the first maritime nations of the earth.

A people, some of whose leaders boasted of never having slept by a cottage fire, became the dread of Christendom. They ruled the waters from the Arctic ocean to the Azores—they passed between the pillars of Hercules—they ravaged the coasts of Spain and France—sacked the cities of Tuscany—drove the Saracens from Sicily. They desolated the classic fields of Greece—penetrated the walls of Constantinople. Yes, in rescuing the Holy Sepulchre, they led the van of the chivalry of Europe. Mark their valor and their success; for one hundred Northmen knights,

* From the rage of the Northmen, good Lord deliver us.

with one aid or squire each, drove ten thousand Saracens from Sicily. Scott gives a beautiful description of this remarkable people, in speaking of the Western Isles:

> "Thither came in times afar
> Stern Lochlin's sons of roving war;
> The Northmen, trained to spoil and blood,
> Skilled to prepare the raven's food;
> Kings of the main, their leaders brave,
> Their barks the dragons of the wave."

In describing king Harold's ship it is said:

> "And dragon's heads adorn the prow of gold,"

Seest thou the tiny fleet of some school-boy, launched on an isolated sheet of water? And such were the greatest armaments of the famous nations of antiquity, compared with those of the Northmen.

The present illustrious Queen of England, is a direct descendant of the Northmen. It will be recollected that Rollo, the Norman, invaded France in 912, and enthroned himself in the North. In 1066, William of Normandy conquered England. These sovereigns were Northmen, and from their family the pride and glory of Great Britain descended.

At the beginning of the eleventh century, the Danes and Norwegians were converted to Christianity, and thereby received a new impulse, that led him to extend the blessings of the Gospel. And who but this people could ever have established missions in Greenland?

What shall we say of the ability of the Northmen to record incidents of their voyages?

In the year 1000, on their conversion to Christianity, they adopted the Roman alphabet. This was their Augustan age. The thirst of the Icelanders for learning, is seen in the conduct of Ulfijot, their supreme legislator, who, in 925, undertook a voyage to Norway, in his sixtieth year, to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the legal customs and institions of the parent country.

In Iceland the learned were called Skalds and Sagamen.

The former were poets and historians. Skalds denote "smoothers and polishers of language."

The Sagamen recited in prose, with greater detail, what the Skalds had recited in verse.

By the recitations of the Skalds, the real and traditionary history of the country was transmitted from generation to generation.

Memory is, perhaps, the most improvable faculty of our nature. Deprived of books it depends upon its own resources. Its strength

is seen in the following instance: An Icelandic Skald sang sixty different lays in one evening, before King Harold Sigurdson; and being asked if he knew any more, declared that these were only the half he could sing,

Their traditionary histories were written down and preserved.

As poetry is among the antiquities of all nations, the events it records have ever been preserved by the recitations of Skalds, Minstrels or Bards.

And whom does the conqueror of Wales cut off from the land? Does not Edward the First, of England, destroy the minstrels of Wales, lest they should, by their recitations, awaken that spirit of liberty in the breasts of the vanquished, which would lead them to throw off the yoke of the British monarch?

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These Skalds were distinguished men—the companions of kings. They sometimes were kings, as in the instance of Regnar Lodbrok.

The Sagamen made their recitations in public and private, at convenient opportunities.

If Augustus delighted to have Virgil and Horace on either hand, so the Scandinavian monarchs rejoiced to have Skalds and Sagamen in their presence.

At solemn feasts the services of these men were required.

Sæmund, in 1056, collected the different poems relating to the mythology and history of the North. The collection was called the "Poetic Edda." He was a man of learning, having been educated at the Universities of Germany and France.

He performed for the ancient poems the same office which is said to have been done by the ancient Greek rhapsodist who first collected and arranged the songs of his predecessors, and reduced them to one continuous poem, called Homer's Iliad.

Snorre Sturlson, judge of Iceland, was the most distinguished scholar of his day. His principal work was the Prosaic Edda? It treats in particular of Scandinavian mythology. He lived in 1178. His bath still attracts the attention of the traveler. The acqueduct of it is five hundred feet long, and is composed of hewn stone, finely united by cement. The reservoir is similarly constructed, and will contain thirty persons. The water was supplied from one of their warm springs.

The general characteristics of the Icelandic tongue are copiousness, energy and flexibility to an extent that rivals every modern language and which enables it to enter into successful competion with the Greek and Latin.

Were not the Icelanders then capable of recording the events incident to a voyage of discovery?

The *internal* evidences found in these documents are in favor of their authenticity.

Besides there are in existence a series of works from the time when these voyages purport to have been made, down to the pre-

sent time, which have been preserved, and which make mention of these discoveries.

Distinguished men who have had superior opportunities of ascertaining the merits of this question, have come to the conclusion that the descendents of the Scandinavians were the discoverers of America, prior to the time of Columbus. Among these are Dr. Forster, Mr. Wheaton, our late Minister at the Court of Berlin, and Baron Von Humboldt, also of the above city.

In a work sent from Denmark are the following important remarks: "Alexander Von Humboldt, who of all modern travelers has thrown the greatest light on the physical circumstances, first discovery and earliest history of America, has admitted that the Scandinavian Northmen were the true original discoverers of the New World. He has also remarked, that the information which the public as yet possesses of that remarkable epoch in the Middle Ages, is extremely scanty; and he has expressed a wish that the Northern Literati would collect and publish all the accounts relating to that subject."

The Society of Northern Antiquarians has complied with his request, in publishing the great work I before mentioned.

Besides Adam of Bremen's account of the discovery of America, this great work speaks of Bishop Eric's voyage to Vinland, in 1121. Although Thorfin's men were driven away at first by the natives, yet it is reasonable to suppose, that they at length returned and formed colonies in this quarter, together with others who visited America, as named in the Icelandic MSS.

If voyages were made, from time to time, to different parts of America, by the Northmen, is it not reasonable to suppose that some parts of our country were inhabited by them for a long time, and that Bishop Eric visited Vinland to perform Episcopal duties, and that the Northmen left evidences of their arts, in the antiquities I will briefly name?

How fond is man to linger around mouldering ruins—to fix the eye on the mutilated column overgrown with ivy! But are there not antiquities as worthy as those of art? I mean those of our own species.

I shall make a remark on a human skeleton I saw, not long since, at Fall River in the vicinity of Narragansett Bay.

I had an extensive view of the region around Mount Hope, lying on the west of Mount Hope Bay. How accurately is the scenery portrayed in the Icelandic documents!

A skeleton was dug up, a few years since, in that place. It had a breast-plate or medal hanging down its neck, thirteen inches long, and six in width at the top, and five at the bottom. It had also an ornament of fillet work around its body, four and a half inches wide. These ornaments are made of brass, or, as Dr. Webb says,

of bronze. A knowledge of the use of this artificial metal implies a considerable advance in the arts.

I witnessed lately an object of interest in the state of New York. Not long since, a large oak tree, cut down at Lyons, was taken to Newark; and on sawing it there were found near the centre the marks of an axe. On counting the concentric circles, it was discovered that four hundred and sixty had been formed since the cutting was made. It is well known that a circle is the growth of a year. But the most striking circumstance is, that this large cavity, now visible, was made by an *edged* tool. The rude stone axes of the present race of Indians could never have made clefts so smooth as those I saw in the block at the hotel of Gen. Barney, at Newark. I have a report of a Historical Society in Ohio, describing a similar cutting made with a metallic axe, about three hundred and fifty years ago.

On further examination, I presume this skeleton, whose head is different from that of the natives, was a Northman; and that the cuttings in this tree were made by axes wielded by the descendants of the Northmen. For I find that the Icelandic MSS, speak of breast-plates worn by the Northmen; and to their axes, it is stated that the natives tried them on wood, and afterwards on stone; but the instruments used by the former to cut down maple trees, could not withstand the use made of them by the latter, upon stone. If it be asked, what has become of the Northmen, and where are their descendants? we answer: Like the mighty master-builders of the splendid cities of Central America, and of the fortifications, mounds, &c., of the United States, they have passed into oblivion. Nations seem to vanish in a day:—like the 300,000 inhabitants of Moscow, who left the city instantly on the approach of the mad Corsican.

There have been discovered beyond latitude 60°, in Greenland, upwards of 500 people, resembling those in the north of Europe, probably descendants of the Northmen.

An important inquiry arises: Was Columbus aware of the discovery of the Northmen? From a letter preserved by his son, it appears he visited Iceland in 1477. It is thought by the Danes that he *there* obtained a knowledge of the discovery of Vinland. Allowing this to be the case, it is singular he should never have given any intimation of such knowledge.

Instead of *walking* through Spain, leading his son by the hand, would he not at once have rushed into the presence of the sovereigns, and acquired patronage, wealth and honor, by telling them that the obscure Icelanders had discovered the region he wished to unfold?

His greatest enemies never accused him of having reached the New World by information received from Iceland.

But as Columbus was rather artful, he might, from particular motives, have concealed this knowledge from the observation of mankind.

After all, let not the circumstance of this prior discovery, cause, in our view, the laurels given to Columbus to wither on his brow. Let us ever honor him for his perseverance and his virtues.

Let not Lief and his associate Northmen deprive him of what the voice of nations has awarded, the merit of having given, not to Ferdinand and Isabella only, but to successive generations, a New World.

Iceland, though but a speck on the bosom of the Northern Ocean is not unworthy of our notice. Though dark to the superficial observer, yet it shines with a lustre brighter than the flame rising from its volcano. It is the light of knowledge. That obscure island is remarkable for the attention paid to learning. Even many among the common class pursue the higher branches of study. Their long nights are enlivened by the custom of every member of the family gathering around the bright lamp, while one reads for the amusement and instruction of all.

The sources of happiness are not, like those of mighty rivers, hid from the view of most people. They are accessible to all. The Icelanders, living in a remote island, and cut off from the privileges that milder climates present, are naturally led to look for happiness in the pursuit of knowledge.

If the celebrated Pliny could say his books were sovereign consolers of sorrow, cannot the Icelander also declare that when mountain waves lash the shores he can find pleasure in the pursuit of those studies that mend the heart and enlighten the mind? Ah, yes! fondness for books will create an artificial summer in the depths of the most gloomy season.

The sunny Italy may boast of the beauteous tints that flush her skies; but after all, her effeminate inhabitants may be destitute of that happiness enjoyed by those who live where winter reigns uncontrolled most of the year.

The benevolence of Deity is seen in the contentedness felt by those who live in the higher latitudes, where, as a writer said of countries north of the Alps, Nature seems to have acted the part of a step-mother.

What a contrast between the condition of the Icelanders and that of their forefathers! They were the worshippers of the god Wodin. And what were his attributes! He was styled the Father of Carnage! His greatest favorites were such as destroyed most of their fellow creatures in the field of battle.

But the Prince of Peace has broken the sceptre of the Father of Carnage. The benign influence of his Gospel is seen in all the de-

partments of Government. Observe its effects as seen in the difference between the feelings of Lodbrok, a Northman King and Skald, and those evinced by Peace Makers in Europe and America! Those who, when storms are rising in the political horizon, instead of "letting slip the dogs of war," do all in their power to avert the threatened dangers. Lodbroke in his death-song says: "Eight Earls graced my Dwina's mouths. The crimson sweat of death poured on the sullen sea." Yes, he exults in seeing his laurels dyed in the blood of his fellow creatures. But the lovers of peace gaze in rapture on those of the Great Pacificators of both continents while verdant under a pacific sky.

Who would not award to such heroes rather than to Augustus Cæsar, a place among the stars? (See Georgica, B. I. 34.)

Such is the influence of Christianity, where the Northmen found those who heard the Great Spirit in the thunder.

This, as Cicero said of Rome, is the glory of all lands.

"Wisdom and knowledge are the stability of our times. All classes become sensible that knowledge is the guardian of property. In every place they eagerly seek after that wisdom which, as Isocrates says, is the only imperishable treasure. Who can stay the progress of knowledge? You might as well think of "binding the sweet influences of Pleiades, or of loosening the bands of Orion,"* as to attempt to oppose the march of mind. To swell the tide of improvement, it is pleasing to reflect that men of the first talents are engaged; and that, through the medium of those lectures, which, if they are not the fountains of knowledge, are important guides to them.

A word in praise of the Scandinavians. Like the patriarch. they went in search of a region, they knew not where. We praise them for their courage, we applaud them for their zeal, we respect them for their motives; for they were anxious to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge. They reached the wished-for land,

"Where now the western sun
O'er fields and floods, o'er every living soul,
Diffuseth glad repose."

The Scandinavians have opened to view a broad region, where smiling Hope invites successive generations from the Old World.

Such men as a Cæsar or a Tamerlane, conquer but to devastate countries. Discoverers add new regions of fertility and beauty to those already known. And are not the hardy adventurers, ploughing the briny wave, more attractive than the troops of Alexander

* As Pleiades appear in Spring, and Orion, in Winter, Patrick gives the following exposition to the above passage, from Job, 38 ch., 31 v.

"Canst thou forbid the sweet flowers to come forth, when the seven stars rise in the Spring, or open the earth for the husbandman's labor, when the winter season at the rising of Orion, ties up his hands."

marching to conquer the world, with plumes waving in the gentle breeze, with arms glittering in the sunbeams? Who can tell the benefits the former confer on mankind?

"To count them all demands a thousand tongues,
A throat of brass, and adamantine lungs."

APPENDIX.

It is possible that the plan of the buildings in Central America, was derived from that of the Tower of Babel.

The following are the dimensions of one the large buildings in Palenque:—

Base 310 by 260 feet—40 feet high. Building 280 by 180 feet—25 feet high. The piers have stuccos, finely painted. The paintings are like the frescoes in Italy.

The paintings Norman saw, were of light green and sky blue. He speaks also, of walls 15 feet thick, composed of good stone finely cemented.

In addition to the valuable essay, I heard Mr. Squier read in New York, I lately saw the following remarks on his discoveries, in Ohio, from the New York Courier.

"His specimens surprised the [Ethnological] Society, as they furnish evidence of a skill and taste in sculpture, far surpassing anything exhibited by the existing Indian tribes. He found the figures of about 100 animals, of different species in all the departments of Geology, formed with such accuracy, as to be readily distinguishable, and many of them shaped with almost perfect accuracy, and finished in detail, as if by superior workmen, showing a liveliness of expression, which would lead to the conclusion that they were the portraits of birds, beasts, fish and reptiles."

Mr. S. is inclined to think the people who left these remains of antiquity, emigrated to Mexico.

In regard to the Northmen'discovery, the following from the Dublin Evening Post, speaks the opinion of distinguished Reviews relative to the Danish work.

This is a very noble, a very curious, and in point of historical interest, a most important volume. This publication has put the matter beyond a doubt:

I saw in the State Library, at Albany, the History of New York, by Moulton and Yates, in which it is fully acknowledged.

In the Museum of Copenhagen Denmark, is to be seen a large piece of a church bell, found in Greenland. It was among the antiquities, left by the Northmen who lived there before the days of Columbus.

The following is from the beautiful Ballad of Professor Longfellow, on the "Skeleton in Armor," found at Fall River:—

Speak! speak! thou fearful guest!
Who, with thy hollow breast,
Still in rude armor drest;
Comest to daunt me!
Wrapped not in Eastern balms,
But with thy fleshless palms
Stretched as if asking alms;
Why dost thou daunt me?

RECOMMENDATIONS.

From Major General Jesup, U. S. A.

I have attended the Lectures of Rev. Mr. Davis, on the Discovery of America, by the Northmen, with much pleasure and profit; and I respectfully recommend him to the patronage of teachers, and the public generally.

THOMAS S. JESUP.

Washington City, March 3, 1843.

From the President and Professors of Columbian College, D. C.

The undersigned cordially join in the recommendation above given.

S. CHAPIN,
WM. RUGGLES,
J. C. B. CHAPLIN.

College Hill, D. C., March 25, 1840.

Philadelphia, Dec. 7, 1839.

Sir—I attended, a few days since, your Lectures in this city, "On the discovery by the Northmen," and derived very great pleasure from the same.

Being by birth a Northman, and having, for some years, studied many of the old Icelandic documents concerning this interesting subject, I hesitate not to say that your lecture is compiled with much care and labor, and cannot but be interesting and instructive to all persons.

Your obedient servant,

C. D. ARFWEDSON, *U. S. Consul at Stockholm.*

From Mrs. Willard of Troy.

Mr. Davis has delivered an interesting and instructive Lecture relating to the history of our country, to the members of the Troy Female Seminary.

From the Boston Daily Advertiser, Oct. 16.

The Lectures now being delivered in this city, by the Rev. A. Davis, on "The Discovery of the American Continent by the Northmen," and on "The Ruins of Central America," are exceedingly interesting. I had the pleasure last evening of being an auditor of the first Lecture, and was, in common with many others, highly gratified. I trust that Mr. Davis may meet with that success which he deserves. He has evidently bestowed great labor and investigation upon this interesting subject, of which he has made himself perfectly master. Those who attend Mr. Davis' Lectures, will find themselves well repaid for the time they may spend, by the instruction and pleasure which they cannot fail to receive.

From Professor Dean, and John Van Buren, Esq.

I have read with much pleasure the Rev. Mr. Davis' printed Lecture on the subject of the Ruins and the Discoveries of the Northmen on this Continent. The subject itself is possessed of much interest, and in the Lecture much research is evidenced, and the whole treated in a very attractive manner.

AMOS DEAN.

Albany, March 31, 1842.